

INDIA - CENTRAL PROVINCE

Official Languages: **Hindi and English**

Vision Statement

“That They All may be One.” (Jn 17:21)

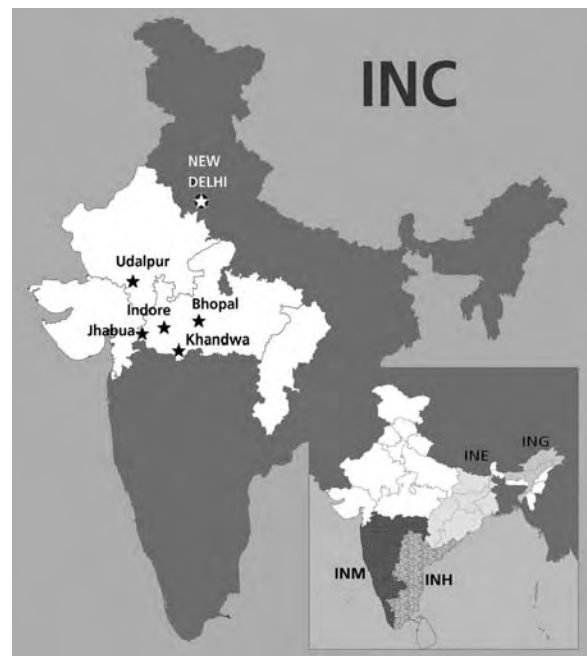
Mission Statement

We, the members of the India Central Province of the Society of the Divine Word, strive to foster unity and harmony in our multi-cultural, multi-religious and diverse situations fragmented by ethnocentrism, fanaticism, discrimination and inequality, through dialogue of life and action with all people and become bridge builders.

We strive to involve all in planning, decision-making and implementation of projects, promotion and evaluation of apostolates to make the poor and the marginalized communities to be self-affirming and self-reliant.

1. Societal Setting

India is endowed with a rich cultural heritage and religious pluralism. Today 79.8% of the population of India practices Hinduism and 14.2% adheres to Islam, 2.3% is Christians while the remaining follow other religions. There are over 19.9 million Catholics in India, which represents around 1.6% of the total population. There are also many Protestant denominations in India, the largest of them is the Church of South India, having about 4 million members and amounting to 0.2% of the total population.



Religious fundamentalism and communalism have grown stronger in recent years. Vigilantism, domination by majorities, and manipulation of electronic media to advance a communal agenda in the name of development have become familiar strategies and frequent scenarios in the country.

2. Ecclesial Setting

Although Christianity in India is believed to be as old as the apostles' times, it is faced with many challenges; the Church still struggles to establish itself. Due to resistance, opposition and interruption in missionary activities, direct evangelization is rendered difficult. However, the SVD missionary intervention in 8 dioceses situated in the 4 states of Central India, namely,

Madhya Pradesh, Gujarat, Rajasthan, and Delhi, has made a definite difference in the life of the tribals and dalits, among whom we mainly work. Of these, 7.3% belong to scheduled tribes while 30.6% fall under the category of dalits. The overall literacy rate in the area is 75.6%.

Visible progress is seen among the people we serve in the aspects of education, economic status, social awareness, etc. Today, after 85 years of our engagement, the local Church consists of mainly tribals and dalits, from whom we have bishops, priests, religious and lay activists. The province is striving to be self-reliant in financial resources and religious vocations.

During its memorable missionary journey in the service of the Word, the province has given birth to several ministries, communities, institutions, provinces and dioceses. Currently 142 confreres are engaged in the above ministries assisted by 62 religious sisters, 14 catechists, and 135 lay collaborators as mission partners. The province is proud of animating and shepherding five dioceses in the region with SVD bishops.

3. Intercultural Mission – *Ad Extra*

Those in Final Vows

IN ACTIVE MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Parish	27	18.9	24.8	24.2
Education	26	18.2	15.2	10.0
Schools	26	-		
Universities	0	-		

Formation/ SVD Vocation	28	19.6	21.1	6.7
Administration/ Support	7	4.9	2.5	12.7
Other Apostolates	29	20.3	25.5	31.2
JPIC	7	-		
Bible	8	-		
Communication	9	-		
Mission Animation	1	-		
Others	4	-		

Those in Final Vows

NOT IN MINISTRY	Personnel	2018 (%)	2012 (%)	2005 (%)
Studies/ Orientation	5	3.5	3.2	3.7
Retired/Sick	17	11.9	5.7	10.4
Others	4	2.8	2.0	0.8

Main Ministries

The province's activities range from primary evangelization to formation of diocesan clergy; from providing quality and value based education to promoting initial and integral formation for SVDs; from family apostolate to poverty alleviation; from fostering communal harmony to furthering interdenominational cooperation; from ministering to the marginalized to minding the migrants; from providing pastoral care for the faithful to preparing personnel for overseas

missions; from conducting retreats and counseling to promoting contemplative spirituality; from running hostels for students to managing the press and publications; from administering a state-of-the-art dental clinic to webcasting religious programs; from answering queries on the Bible and Christian faith to promoting agro-based, eco-friendly activities; from caring for the spiritual needs of the people to promoting inter-religious harmony; from writing lyrics to scoring musical notes, and more.

Characteristic Dimensions

Biblical Apostolate: Our biblical center *Divya Vani*, Bhopal is engaged in promoting Bible related activities. It conducts courses, seminars and workshops on *Lectio Divina*, Bible sharing, Bible retreats, etc., for various groups throughout the year. *Maitri Sadan*, Udaipur; *Sadbhavana*, Delhi; and *Masih Vidya Bhavan*, Indore serve as Catholic Information Centers promoting biblical literature and Bible correspondence. Besides these, the magazine *The Word Among Us*, *Radio Veritas Asia* (Hindi), and *Sat Prachar Press* promote biblical literature through reflections, webcasting and printing respectively. There are eight confreres involved in this ministry.

Mission Animation: District and province level mission animation programs for all our confreres were organized to equip our confreres with mission skills, enhance missionary zeal and instill interest in world-wide mission. Programs for lay people of our mission areas were conducted to create mission awareness among them.

JPIC: *Jan Vikas Kendra*, Indore; *Samman*, Bhopal; *Matruchaya*, Muvalia; and *Social Welfare Centre*, Jhalod are our centers engaged in JPIC concerns. There are seven experienced and qualified confreres working for the cause of the slum dwellers, migrants, waste pickers, construction workers, unorganized domestic workers, unemployed youth, school dropouts, street children, etc.

Communication: Our communication centers—*Satprakashan*, Indore; *Pradeepti*, Khandwa; *Maitri Sadan*, Udaipur—serve our missions, the local dioceses and the region by preparing and providing audio-visual/LCD materials, aids and strategies, assisting them in their pastoral and missionary activities. These centers also regularly organize courses, seminars, and workshops on communication. *The Word Among Us* magazine not only helps to promote our identity as Divine Word Missionaries but also furthers our missionary cause.

Priorities among Congregational Directions

Primary and New Evangelization: Inspired by the Congregational Directions of the XVII General Chapter, the province adopted primary and new evangelization as its first priority. Providentially, the province is blessed with plenty of possibilities for primary and new evangelization. Receptivity to our mission initiatives has had an encouraging outcome in Udaipur diocese. In tune with the INC provincial chapter 2015, the province has begun the process of opening two new mission stations in Dayya and Phalasia in

Rajasthan. The Bishop of Udaipur has invited us to adopt three Tehsils in his diocese, which are still frontier mission areas with plenty of opportunities for primary evangelization and where the people's response to our initiatives is encouraging. Shortage of personnel, aging confreres, hostile atmosphere, hesitancy to move out of established institutions to work in frontier and challenging areas, paucity of funds, etc., are some of the deterrent factors in our enthusiasm to promote primary and new evangelization.

Family and Youth: Considering the urgency to stop the basic ecclesial unit from further deterioration, the province has enhanced its efforts to consolidating and strengthening the existing Small Christian Communities (SCC) and to form new ones, increasing the intensity and frequency of family visits, forming pious associations in our parishes and mission stations, animating the youth, inculcating our school children with family values, sensitizing them with the plight of the poor children, etc. Forming a Home Mission Team to energize the family apostolate and SCC groups is another constructive step taken by the province towards revitalizing this ministry. However, lack of trained personnel for this ministry, the enormity of migration to urban areas, and the influence of secular values have a dampening impact on our efforts.

Interreligious Dialogue and Ecumenism: Taking pride in our initiative and contribution to making prophetic dialogue our mission approach, the province is committed to promoting dialogue

ad intra and dialogue *ad extra*. Equipped with the dialogical attitude, we have been faithful in promoting dialogue with faith and truth seekers, people of other cultures, and the poor. As it forms an essential part of the province's vision-mission, we have mobilized our time and resources to make interreligious dialogue as our way of life. Masih Vidya Bhavan, Indore; Sadbhavana, Delhi; and Maitri Sadan, Udaipur are our institutionalized efforts to promote this ministry. The establishment of Harmony Foundation, the formation of United Christian Forum, and the creation of the Sadbhavana Committee are some of the organized activities undertaken by the province to promote ecumenism in this region. However, antagonisms against minorities, communal tensions and absence of coordination among various denominations have had an adverse impact on the outcome.

Social Justice and Poverty Eradication: One of the major thrusts of the province is working for the upliftment of the scheduled tribes, scheduled caste (dalits), poor and marginalized, and restoring their rightful place in the mainstream society. Among the constructive and affirmative actions taken by the province to promote this cause are: formation and implementation of minimum wages/salaries for our employees, coworkers, and collaborators; construction of houses for our employees and the poor; availing the government welfare program for the poor; obtaining identity cards and *Adhaar* cards for the migrant poor, waste pickers and construction workers; alleviating hunger and diseases through the province and generalate resources; collabo-

ration with diocesan programs for alleviation of poverty, etc. Our centers that promote JPIC concerns such as *Jan Vikas Kendra*, Indore, *Samman*, Bhopal, *Matruchaya Social Service Centre*, Muvalia, and *Social Welfare Centre*, Jhalod are making valiant efforts to eradicate poverty and establish social justice.

Our educational and mission institutions reach out to poor children. Opening up hostel facilities for rural poor and tribal children, who would otherwise not pursue their education, in Badi Damni, Muvalia, Jhalod, Halol, Jhalod, Ogha and Madri, even though they incur a huge financial burden, and starting a hostel for boys in Palda from June 2016 are some of the bold steps taken by the province in this direction. However, the enormity of the problem and lack of adequate funds continue to raise serious challenges as we attempt to address these issues.

Integrity of Creation: We are making sustained efforts to keep all our campuses green and clean by planting trees and eliminating plastics. As part of the policy, every new construction in the province makes provisions for water harvesting, as well as promoting renewable, solar and biogas energies. Perhaps the major step in this direction is the organizing of the waste pickers who keep the cities clean, focusing on the two major cities of Bhopal and Indore through our activities of *Samman* and *Jan Vikas Kendra*. However, there is still more to be done and we have a long way to go in ensuring integrity of creation in our context.

Migration: To address the concern of migration, in collaboration with the SSs and with the assistance of VIVAT International-India, greater awareness is brought among confreres through several conferences, seminars and workshops on the issue of migration and the need to respond to the problem promptly. A team consisting of grass-root representatives from the mission areas of the province that would address the issue at both ends, i.e., source and destination of migration, was formed. Coordinated by the JPIC wing of the province, the two centers, namely, *Samman* and *Jan Vikas*, are not only doing admirably well to reach out to migrants but also building data bases on migration. The appreciable efforts of these two centers to organize the migrant workers and address their problems are nationally recognized and awarded.

Education: As a ministry and a means of self-reliance, the field of education has come to be a major undertaking of the province. Our educational apostolate, besides providing a platform for inculcating values through quality education, has come to play a major role in social transformation. It has come to be a prominent and vibrant ministry, blending beautifully charity and self-reliance. Our education ministry requires infusing a greater sense of professionalism, creating soft structures, training more personnel, making maximum utilization of infrastructure facilities, ensuring substantial and regular investments so as to improve the facilities and remain competitive in the field, and taking full advantage of these reputable educational institutions to build up a good rapport

with government, parents and the wider public for furthering of our vision.

Collaboration with SSpS and Lay Associates

Although our collaboration with the our SSpS is at the moderate level, our working together in the ministries, such as education, migration, JPIC, Bible, and vocation promotion, has proven to be effective and impacts on our witness value.

Till now, we are able to organize and motivate a group of about 45 lay associates called *SVD Mission Friends* who have been exhibiting interest in our mission and spirituality. Residing mainly in Indore, they come together periodically with an SVD animator for prayer and other social activities. Their contribution is still minimal and they have a long way to go to establish themselves as independent Lay Associates with their own statutes and mission activities.

4. Intercultural Life – Ad Intra

MEMBERSHIP	2018	2012	2005
Bishops	5	4	3
Clerics	120	114	110
Brothers (final vows)	18	22	21
Brothers (temporal vows)	6	0	2
Scholastics	52	84	67
Novices	15	38	27
Total	216	262	230

AGE AND COUNTRY	2018	2012	2005
Average age	56.6	54.1	40.8
Nationalities	3	2	3

In light of the Congregational Directions of the last general chapter, the following steps were initiated to strengthen our *ad intra* life.

Community Life & Spirituality: One of the strengths of our communities is their intercultural fabric. The province has succeeded in ensuring that most communities are intercultural, and that holds a powerful witness value. A couple of seminars for confreres on intercultural competence, conducted by the team identified by the generalate, were helpful in enhancing our intercultural life.

By and large, most communities have regular community prayers, Bible sharing and community meetings. Simple life style, hospitality, fraternal caring and collaboration among confreres are edifying signs of our communities. However, some communities need to invest more on these aspects and promote a better communication system among their members. There is a felt need that communities develop the habit of documentation, regularly update their inventory, maintain minutes of their meetings, etc.

Leadership: It is heartening to see in the province, following the principles of subsidiarity and delegation, the leadership at every level is active and vibrant, focusing on its three fundamental aspects, namely, animation, coordination and

administration. It is encouraging to see the leaders working as a team with a dialogical process in the province. The orientation programs for the superiors at the beginning of every academic year have helped the leadership in the province to be acquainted with their roles, requirements and responsibilities. The challenge before us is that the leaders need to become more of animators and coordinators and less of administrators.

Finance: One of the positive and recent developments in the province is that it is on its way to financial self-reliance. The measures taken by the province to mobilize local resources have started paying dividends. Our schools are gradually becoming income generating institutions, although a lot of investment still needs to be done in the educational sector. The province is able to support mission projects and activities with its locally generated funds.

The province is committed to promoting dialogue ad intra and dialogue ad extra.

being one of our aims, it is posing a huge financial burden on our meager resources. Careful and collective planning of the community budgets, exhibiting greater transparency and accountability, profitable use of our farm lands,

However, given the plan and the scope of the mission activities and endeavors, financial resources are still a challenge faced by the province, causing the slowing down of the progress. Providing fair wages to our employees

etc., are some of the areas that need renewed attention.

Initial Formation & Ongoing Formation: The province is a proud host to three major common houses of formation, such as Juniorate, Novitiate and Philosophy, besides providing theological formation to the diocesan clergy. Prioritizing the ministry of formation, the province has spared a large number of well trained and experienced confreres for this ministry. Focus on quality formation with a missionary thrust adds up to the objective of providing integral formation to our candidates. Our services to the local Church in terms of formation and mission animation are well appreciated.

The triennium 2014-17 saw a maximum number of seminars and workshops conducted for our confreres with the view of providing renewal and updating. To strengthen the process of vocation promotion, a team of vocation promoters has been formed. The confreres strive to recruit candidates from their homes and among relatives for both the SVD and SSpS. We attract enough and more candidates to the Society but the survival rate is rather disappointing! However, we realize that a dwindling of vocations in the traditional Catholic belts, heavy dropouts, lack of proper motivation from those who join the Society, want of effective accompaniment and shortage of formation personnel are some of the concerns that are affecting both recruitment and perseverance in our formation programs.